

Message Text

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INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 CCO-00 (ISO) R

DRAFTED BY NEA:AR DAY:TH
APPROVED BY D:CWROBINSON
NEA:ADUBS
P:PCHABIB
S/S:O-AWOTTO
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FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO USDEL SECRETARY IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T STATE 220671 TOSEC 260105

EXDIS FROM ROBINSON

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, US, IS, EG

SUBJECT: ACTION MEMORANDUM: ISRAELI HARASSMENT OF AMOCO
IN GULF OF SUEZ (S/S NO.7618773)

1. PROBLEM:

WHEN TOON DELIVERED TO ALLON SEPTEMBER 3 THE DEMARCHE YOU
AUTHORIZED, ALLON ASSERTED THAT THE DISPUTE IS BETWEEN THE
ISRAELI AND EGYPTIAN GOVERNMENTS AND THAT THE U.S. WAS
BEING USED BY THE EGYPTIANS AGAINST THE ISRAELIS. HE SAID,
HOWEVER, THAT ISRAEL WOULD NOT HARASS THE AMOCO DRILLING
SHIP IN THE FUTURE BUT WOULD MAKE THINGS DIFFICULT FOR IT.
WHEN THE DRILL SHIP WENT TO THE SITE AGAIN THE MORNING OF
SEPTEMBER 4, WE ARE INFORMED BY AMOCO, THE ISRAELI GUNBOAT
ORDERED IT TO LEAVE AND THREATENED TO CUT ITS TOWING LINE.
WE HAVE ALSO HAD REPORTS OF FIRING AT BUOYS BY ISRAELI
VESSELS. WE NEED NOW TO CONSIDER HOW WE RESPOND TO THIS
SITUATION.

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2. BACKGROUND:

IN HIS REBUTTAL TO TOON'S PRESENTATION, ALLON ASSERTED THAT
THE EGYPTIANS HAVE INDUCED THE U.S. TO PRESS THE ISRAELIS

ON THIS ISSUE AND HAVE DRIVEN A WEDGE BETWEEN US AND ISRAEL

BECAUSE OF AN OIL CONCESSION SADAT HAS GIVEN TO AMOCO.

3. ALLON MADE NO SPECIFIC RESPONSE TO OUR SUGGESTION THAT THE ISRAELIS SIMPLY ALLOW AMOCO TO DRILL IN TERRITORY THE ISRAELI GOVERNMENT CLAIMS LIES IN ITS JURISDICTION WHILE CONTINUING TO ASSERT JURISDICTION, THOUGH HE DID SAY THAT AMOCO SHOULD APPROACH THE GOI IF IT WANTS TO DRILL EAST OF THE MEDIAN LINE.

4. WHEN AMOCO SENT ITS DRILL SHIP BACK TO THE SITE SEPTEMBER 4, AN ISRAELI GUNBOAT ORDERED IT TO LEAVE. AMOCO STATES THE ISRAELIS THREATENED TO CUT THE TOW LINE, WHICH BY THEIR ACCOUNT COULD HAVE CAUSED THE DRILLING RIG TO DRIFT INTO AN ALREADY OPERATING FIELD NEARBY WITH CONSIDERABLE RISK TO CURRENT OPERATIONS. THE DRILL SHIP THEREUPON WITHDREW.

5. THE EGYPTIANS ARE OF COURSE TRYING TO USE US, THROUGH AMOCO, TO ESTABLISH THEIR CASE ABOUT THE MEDIAN LINE AS WELL AS TO MAKE POSSIBLE EXPLORATION OF WHAT THEY AND AMOCO BELIEVE MAY WELL BE A LUCRATIVE SITE. FOR OUR PART, WE HAVE BEEN CAREFUL TO BASE OUR POSITION, VIS-A-VIS BOTH ISRAELIS AND EGYPTIANS, ON THE FACT THAT AMOCO IS AN AMERICAN COMPANY. THE CONCESSION THAT AMOCO IS ATTEMPTING TO DRILL WAS ISSUED BY EGYPT IN 1964 AND, AS IS COMMON, IT HAD A DEADLINE BY WHICH DRILLING WOULD HAVE TO BE UNDERWAY OR THE CONCESSION WOULD BE LOST. THIS DEADLINE-- SEPTEMBER 21, 1976--HAS BEEN EXTENDED BY THE EGYPTIANS IN THE PAST BUT THEY ARE NOW REFUSING TO EXTEND IT AGAIN. IN THIS SENSE THEY ARE FORCING THE ISSUE WITH THE ISRAELIS, BUT ALLON WAS INCORRECT IN IMPLYING THAT THE EGYPTIANS HAD CREATED THE WHOLE SITUATION BY ISSUING THE CONCESSION FOR POLITICAL REASONS. (WE MAY AT SOME POINT WANT TO CONSIDER SUPPORTING AN AMOCO REQUEST TO EGYPT TO
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EXTEND THE DEADLINE.)

6. WE DO NOT WANT TO ALLOW THIS ISSUE TO GET BLOWN OUT OF PROPORTION, BUT WE ALSO DO NOT WANT TO BACK DOWN ON AMOCO'S RIGHT TO DRILL. WE SUGGEST THE FOLLOWING APPROACH:

-- TOON SHOULD SEE RABIN (WHO WAS UNABLE TO SEE HIM WHEN HE WISHED TO MAKE HIS DEMARCHE SEPTEMBER 3) TO STRAIGHTEN OUT THE FACTS OF THE SITUATION, REGISTER OUR PROTEST AT THE CONTINUING HARASSMENT, AND REITERATE THE PRACTICAL, COMMON-SENSE PROPOSAL TOON MADE TO ALLON, NAMELY, THAT THEY PERMIT DRILLING WHILE RESERVING THEIR LEGAL POSITION.

-- INFORM AMOCO THAT WE ARE CONTINUING TO PRESS THE

ISRAELIS TOWARD A SOLUTION OF THE IMPASSE, THAT IT IS UP TO AMOCO MEANWHILE WHETHER TO MAKE FURTHER ATTEMPTS TO DRILL, BUT THAT AMOCO WOULD HAVE TO EXPECT THE SAME KIND OF HARASSMENT FROM THE ISRAELIS UNTIL WE HAVE WORKED OUT A SOLUTION WITH THEM.

-- YOUR RESPONSE TO FAHMY THAT HERMANN DELIVERED ON SEPTEMBER 3 STILL COVERS THE SITUATION, AND HERMANN CAN SIMPLY KEEP THE EGYPTIANS INFORMED OF OUR CONTINUING EFFORTS WITH THE ISRAELIS.

7. THIS COURSE OF ACTION IS BASICALLY IN ACCORD WITH RECOMMENDATIONS HERMANN HAS MADE (ALTHOUGH HE MADE NO SUGGESTION ABOUT FURTHER CONTACTS WITH THE EGYPTIAN GOVERNMENT). THE FOLLOWING TELEGRAM TO CAIRO AND TEL AVIV, FOR YOUR APPROVAL, WOULD PUT IT INTO EFFECT.

8. BEGIN TEXT OF PROPOSED TELEGRAM:

IMMEDIATE TO TEL AVIV AND CAIRO - SECRET/EXDIS
FOR AMBASSADORS FROM THE SECRETARY
E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, US, IS, EG

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SUBJECT: ISRAELI HARASSMENT OF AMOCO IN GULF OF SUEZ

(A) WE DO NOT WANT TO ALLOW AMOCO ISSUE TO BE BLOWN OUT OF ALL PROPORTION, BUT BELIEVE WE MUST CONTINUE TO MAINTAIN OUR SUPPORT FOR AMOCO'S RIGHT TO DRILL. OUR POSITION MUST RELATE MAINLY TO THE RIGHTS OF AN AMERICAN COMPANY RATHER THAN TO THE ISRAELI-EGYPTIAN DISPUTE OVER THE GULF. FINALLY, WE MUST CONTINUE TO LEAVE DECISIONS ABOUT MOVEMENT AND OPERATION OF THE AMOCO DRILL SHIP TO AMOCO, WHILE KEEPING THE COMPANY INFORMED OF THE SITUATION AS WE UNDERSTAND IT.

(B) FOR AMBASSADOR TOON: YOU WERE RIGHT TO MAKE YOUR APPROACH TO ALLON IN THE CIRCUMSTANCES, BUT GIVEN THE FURTHER ISRAELI INTERFERENCE, COUPLED WITH THE UNHELPFUL CHARACTER OF ALLON'S RESPONSE, YOU SHOULD NOW TALK OVER THE PROBLEM WITH RABIN. RUN THROUGH THE SAME TALKING POINTS WITH HIM, AS WELL AS ALLON'S RESPONSES. TELL HIM THAT WE WANT TO KEEP THIS PROBLEM IN PROPORTION BUT THAT WE DO VERY MUCH OBJECT TO HAVING AN AMERICAN COMPANY TREATED IN THIS FASHION AND WE MUST CONTINUE TO INSIST ON THE COMPANY'S RIGHTS TO DRILL. THIS CONCESSION WAS GRANTED TO AMOCO IN 1964, AND AS IS CUSTOMARY THERE IS A

DEADLINE BY WHICH THE COMPANY MUST DRILL OR LOSE IT. THE

DEADLINE IS SEPTEMBER 21, 1976. AMOCO HAD BEEN ATTEMPTING FOR OVER A MONTH NOW TO COMMENCE DRILLING AND THUS IT IS NOT SOMETHING WE HAVE SUDDENLY CONFRONTED THE ISRAELIS WITH.

(C) WE DO NOT ACCEPT ALLON'S ATTEMPT TO LINK OUR POSITION WITH AN EGYPTIAN POLITICAL CAMPAIGN AGAINST ISRAEL, AND WE RESENT THE ASSERTION THAT WE ARE PLAYING EGYPT'S GAME.

(D) ALLON STATED THAT THE ISRAELIS WOULD NOT HARASS THE VESSEL BUT WOULD NOT MAKE THINGS EASY FOR IT. BY OUR DEFINITION, A GUNBOAT'S ORDER TO DEPART, DELIVERED TO AN UNARMED CIVILIAN VESSEL, IS HARASSMENT, AND IF REPORTS ARE CORRECT THAT THERE WAS A THREAT TO CUT THE TOW LINE, THIS WOULD MAKE IT DOUBLY SO. THIS IS NOT THE FIRST TIME
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WE HAVE GOTTEN ONE STORY FROM JERUSALEM AND ANOTHER FROM THE COMMANDERS ON THE SCENE AND WE WOULD LIKE AN EXPLANATION. (IF THE REPORTS OF FIRING BY ISRAELI VESSELS ARE SUBSTANTIATED, YOU SHOULD OBVIOUSLY MAKE A VIGOROUS PROTEST ON THAT SCORE.)

(E) ALL OF THIS HAVING BEEN SAID, THE QUESTION STILL REMAINS OF AVOIDING FUTURE DIFFICULTY BY FINDING SOME PRACTICAL SOLUTION. YOU SUGGESTED TO ALLON THAT ISRAEL PERMIT THE AMOCO VESSEL TO DRILL ON THE SITE WHILE CONTINUING TO PRESERVE THEIR POSITION THAT THE SITE IS UNDER ISRAELI JURISDICTION. WHILE WE DO NOT AGREE WITH THAT LEGAL POSITION, WE WILL NOT JOIN IN ANY EFFORT TO PORTRAY THE AMOCO DRILLING AS EVIDENCE THAT THE SITE LIES OUTSIDE ISRAELI JURISDICTION. AS WE UNDERSTAND IT, ISRAEL DOES NOT CONTEST THE VALIDITY OF THE PRE-1967 CONCESSION, SO THAT WHAT IS INVOLVED IS THE ISSUE OF DRILLING THERE NOW UNDER PREVAILING CIRCUMSTANCES. IT IS NOT PRACTICAL TO ASK AMOCO TO APPLY TO THE ISRAELIS FOR PERMISSION TO DRILL, HOWEVER. FOR ONE THING, THIS WOULD GIVE ACTIVE SUPPORT TO THE LEGAL POSITION WE DO NOT AGREE WITH. FOR ANOTHER, AMOCO IS OBVIOUSLY DEPENDENT ON THE EGYPTIANS FOR MANY OTHER CONCESSION AREAS AND COULD NOT THEREFORE TAKE A STEP THAT WOULD BE STRONGLY OPPOSED BY THE EGYPTIAN GOVERNMENT.

(F) THE ISSUE WILL NOT ALLOW FOR DELAY UNTIL ALLON COMES TO THE U.S., AS HE SUGGESTED, NOR IS IT REALLY USEFUL, AS HE ALSO SUGGESTED, TO HAVE QUOTE EXPERTS UNQUOTE DISCUSS IT. WE NEED TO REACH SOME MODUS OPERANDI QUICKLY BEFORE, DESPITE OUR BEST EFFORTS, THE ISSUE BECOMES FAR MORE TROUBLESOME THAN IT SHOULD BE ALLOWED TO BE.

(G) FOR AMBASSADOR EILTS: YOU SHOULD REAFFIRM WITH AMOCO AND THE EGYPTIANS THAT WE ARE CONTINUING TO PURSUE THE MATTER WITH THE ISRAELIS. TELL AMOCO THAT WE CONTINUE TO REGARD DECISIONS ABOUT DRILLING TO BE THEIRS TO MAKE, BUT WE WILL KEEP THEM INFORMED OF THE ISRAELI POSITION. AS OF NOW, WE WOULD OBVIOUSLY HAVE TO ASSUME THAT FURTHER ATTEMPTS TO SEND IN THE DRILLING RIG WOULD MEET ISRAELI INTERFERENCE AS IN PAST INCIDENTS. (FYI:

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WE DO NOT KNOW THE BASIS FOR THE MISUNDERSTANDING ABOUT QUOTE FIRM ASSURANCES UNQUOTE FROM THE DEPARTMENT THAT THE ISRAELIS WOULD NOT SEND GUNBOATS AGAIN.)

(H) WHILE WE ARE NOT IN A POSITION TO TELL THE EGYPTIANS NOT TO SEND GUNBOATS OUT TO THE AREA, PARTICULARLY SINCE THEY ARE OSTENSIBLY DOING SO TO PROTECT AMOCO AND NOT TO INTERFERE WITH IT, YOU SHOULD TRY TO GET THE POINT ACROSS TO THE EGYPTIANS THAT THE BASIS OF OUR EFFORT WITH THE ISRAELIS HAS TO BE THAT AMOCO, AS AN AMERICAN COMPANY, HAS A RIGHT TO DRILL ON THAT SITE, AND EGYPTIAN ACTIONS THAT LEAD TO CONFRONTATION BETWEEN THEM AND ISRAEL OVER THE QUESTION REDUCES RATHER THAN ENHANCES THE CHANCES OF OUR MAKING THIS STICK. WE UNDERSTAND THAT THE EGYPTIANS THINK THE ISRAELIS WILL BACK DOWN IF THE DRILLING RIG PERSISTS, BUT EXPERIENCE TO DATE SHOULD BE AMPLE EVIDENCE THAT THIS TACTIC WILL NOT WORK IN PRACTICE. END TEXT.

9. RECOMMENDATION: THAT YOU APPROVE THE FOREGOING TELEGRAM TO TEL AVIV AND CAIRO.
APPROVE.....DISAPPROVE.....

10. DRAFTED:NEA:ARDAY
CLEARANCES:NEA:ADUBS
P:PCHABIB
D:CWROBINSON
S:HCOLLUMS

ROBINSON

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<< END OF DOCUMENT >>

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